

# ACADEMIC *discourse*

DEVELOPING ACADEMIC LANGUAGE COMPETENCE IN ALL STUDENTS

## Features of Effective Classroom Participation Structures

- *More student talk than teacher talk*
- *Tangible, visible evidence checks of student engagement*
- *Relevant vocabulary and language strategy development*
- *Active listening accountability*
- *Task based social interaction*



## ✧ Academic Discourse: What is it? ✧

**Academic discourse** is the use of content-specific vocabulary in conjunction with the language functions necessary for formal, academic discussions. Such functions may include, but are not limited to, paraphrasing, expressing an opinion, or asking for clarification. Academic discourse is strikingly different from everyday conversation. It requires the use of the formal language register as well as more complex syntax than everyday conversation. It includes the language of texts in diverse fields of study.

**In order for students** to become proficient in using academic language, teachers must integrate language strategy training in an explicit, structured, and recursive fashion. Many students, including English learners, are not familiar with critical language functions for classroom interaction and learning. When students receive explicit instruction in the proper use of formal, academic language functions, classroom discussions are more democratic and all learners are prepared to make vibrant contributions.

*“Language proficiency in a challenging, standards-conscious secondary English Language Arts/Content Area classroom includes not only the*

*relevant vocabulary to access lesson content, but also the various language forms or structures needed to discuss the content.”*

*- Kate Kinsella  
and Kevin Feldman,  
Sonoma County Office of  
Education and San Francisco  
State University*